

MARITIME ASSOCIATION OF HARNESS DOG SPORTS (“MAHDS”)



Rules & Requirements for Non-Competitive Classes

Last updated: July 2019

1 Introduction

1.1 Definition of Non-Competitive Class (“Fun Run”)

1.1.1 Non-competitive classes (also referred to as “fun runs” or “dog-friendly runs”) typically refer to running events that allow for the inclusion of a canine teammate. These classes are designed to encourage safe, non-competitive engagement with harness dog sports. Aspects such as costumes and fun awards (such as closest guesstimate or muddiest duo) are highly encouraged! Organizers interested in offering a fun-run class must familiarize themselves with these Rules as well as the *MAHDS Code of Conduct* prior to applying for fun run sanctioning.

1.2 Objectives

1.2.1 To promote Fun Runs that are an enjoyable, non-competitive experience for both human and canine participant.

1.3 General

1.3.1 If an organizer intends to hold a fun run during an event which also includes a competitive class, the *Rules & Requirements for Event Organizers* take precedence over these rules and must be adhered to in full.

1.3.2 These classes should focus on promoting a positive experience for both human and canine participants and therefore should consider the safety and wellbeing of the dog a top priority. These rules, requirements and recommendations are premised on nationally accepted safety standards and exist to assist organizers with this objective.

1.3.3 Any discipline may be held as a fun run, however, for all disciplines apart from canicross, full regulations must be adhered to with respect to gear and course marking as per the *Rules & Requirements for Participants*. There is no substantial difference to the event organizer apart from the awarding of placings and the focus on non-competitive fun.

1.4 Minimum Age of Dogs for Races

- 1.4.1 The following guidelines apply to all forms of non-competitive classes:
- 2 km and under: 10 months
 - 2 - 6 km: 12 months
 - 6 - 10 km: 15 months
 - 10+ km: 18 months

1.5 Sanctioning of a Non-Competitive Class / “Fun Run”

- 1.5.1 Non-Competitive Classes are eligible for sanctioning where the Event Organizer submits an application for sanctioning no later than three (3) weeks prior to the event and meets all requirements outlined within this document.

2 Course

2.1 Surface

- 2.1.1 Road running events are not safe or suitable for dogs to participate in. Pavement can harm a dogs’ pads and the impact on canine joints of running on pavement is substantially higher than the impact on humans and can have long-term negative ramifications. A course may cross a road, but may not be entirely or primarily on pavement or concrete type surfaces. Please see Article 9.2 of the *“Rules & Requirements for Event Organizers”* for further information regarding abrasive surfaces.

2.2 Starts

- 2.2.1 MAHDS highly recommends the use of wave starts for canicross and canitrail type classes. For more information on wave starts, please see Article 6.2.3 of the *Rules & Requirements for Event Organizers*.
- 2.2.2 MAHDS recommends the avoidance of mass starts for events involving dogs, as this creates a substantially higher risk for injury to both human and canine participants. However, if a mass start style is to be used, the start area must be wide enough to accomodate sufficient spacing between teams. The width of the start area and proposed start type must be indicated on the organizer’s application and will be assessed by MAHDS when the application is processed.
- 2.2.3 If the event is a mixed run where there will be runners with and without dogs, runners with dogs should start first. This is to ensure a minimum of passing by either group. Runners with dogs will typically be faster than the majority of runners without dogs.

3 Requirements

3.1 Canicross and Canitrail

- 3.1.1 A strict ratio of one dog to one human must be adhered to for these events.

- 3.1.2 At minimum, participants must use a properly fitted harness with back attachment for the dog attached to a hands-free leash or canicross belt and bungee line secured around the human participant's waist. The leash or bungee line must be attached to the back of the dog's harness at all times during the class.
- 3.1.3 No dogs will be allowed to run attached to collars of any kind. Please see *MAHDS Code of Conduct* for further information.

3.2 All other Disciplines

- 3.2.1 All other disciplines must adhere to the requirements outlined for that discipline in the *Rules & Requirements for Event Organizers*.

4 Temperature & Distance Requirements

4.1 Measurement

- 4.1.1 The temperature is measured 50 centimeters from the ground, in the shade and sheltered from the wind.

4.2 Minimum & Maximum

- 4.2.1 No dogs may be harnessed or participate in any class when the temperature is above 30 degrees Celsius ("°C") or below -30°C.

4.3 Temperature-Specific Safety Requirements

- 4.3.1 When the temperature exceeds 15°C, a small swimming pool or a body of water must be available for dogs to cool off near the finish area.
- 4.3.2 A heat schedule for running events is provided below. A full list of sport-specific heat schedules can be found at Article 15 of the *Rules & Requirements for Event Organizers* and must be adhered to in full.
- 4.3.3 Notwithstanding the sport-specific heat schedules provided in Article 15 of the *Rules & Requirements for Event Organizers* and below, MAHDS shall at all times have the authority to require a route distance be reduced or class be cancelled or rescheduled if, at the discretion of the MAHDS board or appointed representative, the temperature (inclusive of humidity and windchill) poses a safety risk to dogs. In case of extreme conditions, the organizer, in collaboration with MAHDS may further modify or cancel an event or class to address temperature concerns.
- 4.3.4 Where a heat schedule comes into effect, no dogs may participate in more than one class in a single day.

4.4 Summer Events

- 4.4.1 All event organizers must be prepared to adjust route distances up to the day of the event to accommodate for safety of the dogs given temperature on the day of the event.
- 4.4.2 Given typical temperatures in the Maritimes in July and August, no classes will be sanctioned as “competitive regional circuit” classes during these months. Non-competitive classes may be approved during this period, as long as the temperature is not above 30 degrees Celsius (“°C”) on the day of the event and the sport-specific heat schedules provided in Article 15 (referenced above) and below are enforced.
- 4.4.3 Organizers hosting events during the months of July and August must ensure any run allowing dogs takes place in the early part of the day and must not publicize the event at a distance longer than 3.5km. Organizers must be prepared to shorten the route on the day of the event if temperatures (inclusive of humidity) require and must provide a notice to participants indicating that the route distance may require adjustment depending on the temperature on the day of the event. Please see Article 5.3.1 of this document for an example of this notice.

4.5 Temperature Schedule for Canicross and Canitrail

- 4.5.1 Route distances may not exceed the following distances when the following temperatures are present:
- Between 10 and 17 ° C: maximum 8 km;
 - 18 to 23°C: maximum 3.5 km;
 - 24°C at 28°C: Only non-competitive fun runs of a distance of 2 km or less may take place

5 Infrastructure

5.1 Insurance

- 5.1.1 Insurance that specifically covers the parameters of the event (i.e. includes coverage for canine inclusion) is required and confirmation of insurance must be submitted to MAHDS in advance of the event in order to receive sanctioning status.

NOTE: Most regular event insurance does not cover the inclusion of dogs.

5.2 Volunteers

- 5.2.1 All volunteers should be notified not to touch or approach dogs while participating in the event unless they have asked the owner and the owner has indicated that they may approach the dog.
- 5.2.2 In addition, dogs hear sounds at a much louder volume than humans do and some dogs may be frightened by loud noises and shouting and volunteers stationed throughout the course should be advised to avoid the use of horns, bells, and megaphones in the vicinity of dogs and to limit their shouts of encouragement if the dogs appear fearful.

5.3 Notice to Participants

5.3.1 MAHDS recommends providing the following Note to Participants for running events:

We have partnered with the Maritime Association of Harness Dog Sports (MAHDS) and are working together to ensure a safe and fun run for all human and canine participants! To that end, we may need to adjust the distance of the course for our dog-friendly fun run on the day of the event depending on the temperature. We also require all dogs be attached to their human using a hands-free leash and harness with back attachment. These requirements help to make sure our running buddies are safe and healthy throughout the event! We can't wait to see you and your 6-legged team on the start line!

5.4 Additional Recommendations

5.4.1 If the event will involve costumes, please bear in mind the comfort of the dog. Costumes should not restrict the dog's free-flowing movement and participants should take care to ensure their costumes do not frighten or cause injury to their dog or other participant's dogs.